

# THE QUAVER,

WITH WHICH IS PUBLISHED "CHORAL HARMONY,"

A monthly Advocate of Popular Musical Education,

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[One Penny.]

## THE LETTER-NOTE METHOD,

An easy System which

### TRAINS TO SING AT SIGHT

FROM THE ORDINARY NOTES.

Its Tenets are these:—

1. That **METHOD** involves a careful Graduation of the lessons, a thorough Treatment of every point studied, and an Elucidation of Principles as well as Facts.

2. That the **STAFF-NOTATION**, taking it all round, is the **BEST** yet invented, affording peculiar advantages to the **PLAYER**, and also to the **SIGHT-SINGER** who understands his work.

3. That the best systems of sight-singing are those founded upon the **TONIC DO** principle, because the **KEY** is a mere accident, but the **SCALE** is the **TUNE**, and it is by the relation which the sounds bear to the Tonic and to each other (not by their pitch upon the Stave) that the Vocalist sings.

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8. That, although the habitual use of Letter-note is quite unnecessary to the matured Sight-singer, it increases the reading power of the **YOUTHFUL** and the **UNSKILLED**, enabling them to attain an early familiarity with a better class of music, and thus cultivating a higher musical taste.



## Personal Reminiscences of Mendelssohn.

(Concluded from page 299).

THE opera on which he had during the last five or six months been more or less engaged—for Mendelssohn was, it must be remarked, a very different composer from Rossini, and not a bar passed from his pen which he had not both carefully and sedulously studied—was founded on the subject of "Loreley," from which fiction it took its name. Admirable was the intrigue or plot of the opera, which, in my opinion, formed one of the very best *libretti* that I have ever had the opportunity of looking over. Geibel had given me the chance of hearing it, and it fully justified my opinion of the poet from whose pen it had proceeded. The melody which the composer had lavished upon it was even more than worthy of the words. It was, in truth, a somewhat rare conjunction of the merits of the word and music weavers.

Now, in listening to the master himself who plays over the score of his opera upon the piano, the hearer possesses one rare advantage, and a hundred disadvantages.

The disadvantages are the absence of all those combinations of the instruments by which the composer is able to express so much—the want of that decided light and shade which is mainly caused by his instrumentation, and even still more the want of those voices which constitute his colouring.

The advantage is this. He translates every idea with its true and right feeling. Surely this is no common one. I have heard, at different periods Spohr, Wallace, Loder, and Balfe, as well as Mendelssohn, play over snatches from their operas, and have invariably felt the presence of the mind of the composer.

It may consequently be conceived how beautiful, under the fingers of Mendelssohn, became the first act of the "Loreley," for Geibel paid for my intrusion by the musician's absolutely refusing to play that which he had commenced of the second. The weird, rather than supernatural, character of the melody in which the Spirit of the Rhine, Loreley herself, was introduced; the feeling, rather than passion—for Mendelssohn as a musician lacks passion, as indeed do the greater portion of the German composers—which pervaded the whole of the first act: that abandon to his subject, which is one of the most peculiar characteristics of the master, combined with a care in the formation of his musical phraseology, which at times strikingly

recalls Albert Durer and the earlier painters of Germany to my mind, awoke in me a profound feeling of admiration. At present but a single air can be recalled by me—the first which is sung by Loreley as she is heard sighing forth her song to the winds of the night. Yet how exquisitely lovely was that air. How touchingly wild in its attractiveness, and how simple in its character. Not that its simplicity was the natural result of impulse on the part of the writer. It is rather the result of profound and unwearied study. Yet that simplicity was for this very reason far more characteristic of the subsequent Spirit of the River than the spontaneous outpouring of Rossini's heart could possibly have been. In the one writer humanity is predominant. The passion of the flesh makes itself felt in every note he utters. In the other, there is little or no passion. Feeling there is, of the deepest and most subtle character—a feeling which pervades the whole of his writings, which lays its hand around your heart, and bears it with him whithersoever he may will. Rarely indeed does it raise you to the heaven of heavens. Unlike that wonderful Mass of Mozart, or Handel's "Messiah," the gates of the holy of holies seem closed upon his music. But, of all between earth and heaven, he is the lord paramount. Listen to the fairy music in the "Midsummer Night's Dream." Marvellous is the power which he wields over your senses. You are borne away into the realms of elf and spirit. They bound and float around you. Unwinged, indeed, they may not bear you above the clouds of earth; but, enwound by them, you feel their empire, and you obey the spell which is wielded by the master. You believe in the tale of *faërie*, and sway willingly to the promptings of the music.

Moreover, as a pianist, Mendelssohn is perhaps the greatest that I have ever known—Chopin, perhaps, alone excepted. In saying this I shall possibly expose myself to the oburgation of every admirer of those feats of prestidigitation in which Thalberg, Liszt, Leopold der Meyer, and others, more or less indulge. He feels, while they play. I had before heard him perform, but this was in public at one of the Philharmonic Concerts in London. Here it was different. The piano on which he repeated the strains of the "Loreley" was by no means a fine instrument, but the feeling of the man made amends for its deficiencies in tone.—C. G. ROSENBERG.

LOCKE'S MUSIC FOR "MACBETH." All the choruses usually performed, the vocal score only, price one penny, in "Choral Harmony, No. 52.

London: F. Pitman, 20, Paternoster Row.  
Edinburgh: Johnstone, Hunter, & Co.

## The Spirit of Church Song.

**I**T is not to be pretended that any dictatorial or hard and fast lines can be laid down with regard to the composition of church or any other music; art is too wide a field and stretches onwards beyond human thought and ken. However, some useful deductions may be arrived at by the earnest student, who will avail himself of the experiences of the past epochs of the art, as regards the branch he is at work in; and in no department of the art can more, or as much information be gathered together as in church music; for music was and ever will be the hand-maid of religion, and sacred music has in its very nature, less of the mutability of fashion than any other kind.

Now the church composer finds in his high branch of the art the necessary presence of seriousness and solidity; still he has to face the danger of falling into the one extreme of too formal an adherence to fixed contrapuntal idioms or designs, or into the too lavish use of the emotional and expressive melodic and harmonic idioms of his own time.

The first of these dangers may arise from the adoption of contrapuntal forms the writer may deem, by reason of antiquity and innate sense of veneration and seemly association, to be most fit for the service of the church, but which he is not strong enough to control into a vital stream of harmony, and possibly in his heart of hearts has but little real sympathy with. The second error of judgment may be fallen into readily enough, by the composer's training having prepared his mind only for the expression of disconnected, passing emotions in perpendicular harmony with but weak horizontal links, and meretricious only as regards the internal sympathy of the sounds forming the several chords; and by that contracted mental power, which too often enables one only to find beauty in a group of harmonic flowers near at hand, when there is a grand outlying prospect first to be thought of.

The remedy for both extremes lies in healthy, liberal thought training. Indeed, the thorough study of the periodic styles and historical progress of the various schools of church music, would seem to be no small part of the education of the church composer; and the most successful writers of church song have been, in confirmation of this view, the best read musicians.

The primary condition of success though, really lies in the spirit in which the church composer

approaches his work. In the older music of the sanctuary, not only the then limitations of the more dramatic impulses of the art, but the habit of regarding the liturgical words, with a sedate, becoming reverence, helped largely to build up the noble devotion and great humility, which are truly the highest features of the best church music of the Italian and English Schools of the period from 1500 to about 1640. The writers of this period seemed to say to themselves, "These awful and sublime words are beyond the highest art expressions; we cannot worthily sing the angels' songs; let us strive, then, to write sustained and even strains in all devotion and humility." Such music may seem to modern ears, to level too much, praise and prayer, to lack the intense pathos and dramatic jubilation of the tone thoughts to be secured now; still it was built up in quiet, sober utterances, betokening that spirit of self-abnegation and humility with which the church musician should ever labour.

It may of course be advanced, that what is to modern ears a venerable style, was in the time of its writers a familiar manner, and that a sixteenth century madrigal was much in the style of the church song of the same period. This is true in a degree, but it does not affect the question of the general suitability of the style for church music, from evenness, dignity, simplicity of thought and absence of dramatic effort and assumption.

There is no denying the fact, that current idioms of speech and music will at all periods, and may safely under certain conditions, find their use in the lips and hands of both preachers and church musicians.

However, if the elder church schools lacked dramatic impulses, the general manner from the very want of assumption, was one of comparative safety. "That, 'Fools rush in where angels fear to tread' is a truism never to be seen in a stronger and more significant light than in the abuse, and consequently egotistical assumption where egotism is little short of being a crime, of the dramatic method of word painting in church music.

It would seem, then, that the church composer should approach his task with not only an earnest desire to express the text as worthily as possible, but with the balancing resolution to avoid attempts to be too realistic in expression, as often dealing with words not here to be either fully realised or expressed.

It is useless to quote passages, in which men of impulsive genius appear to succeed in a complete dramatic, not to say theatrical treatment of sacred text. Such success, in its assumption often damaging to that high verbal power

frequently best set forth by the simplest and humblest means, may be only splendid failure.

The church composer would therefore do well, to write in a mingled spirit of lofty earnestness, and lowly humility, carefully preparing himself for his work, not only by a thorough mastery of the technicalities of the art, but also by a painstaking examination of the finest efforts of all schools. He should train his feelings first, and then express them without restraint, pedantry, or assumption.

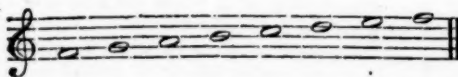
Much, of course, could be further said in favour of the reflective, faithfully lasting power of the contrapuntal idioms, as compared with the more instantly impressionable and perhaps spasmodic outbursts of dramatic harmonies. However, the watchful, earnest student will not fail to learn this, and much more regarding the genius of church music, than has been very imperfectly pointed out in the above words.—E. H. TURPIN, in *The Musical Standard*.

### Varieties of the Musical Scale.

THE gamut, or scale of sounds, made use of by the nations of Europe and in the colonies established by them; is the result of a series of modifications produced partly by accident and partly by design, from ancient times to the seventeenth century. It has become to us, both by education and by habit, the only rule of the metaphysical relations of sounds which the ear will admit, and which renders us, to a certain extent, unable to conceive of any other.

But it is not so with all nations; some of them have had, or still have, very different divisions of the general scale of sounds. These divisions are of two kinds—one founded upon intervals of sounds of the same nature with those of European music, but differently arranged; the other upon smaller intervals, not appreciable by our ears. We will first examine the former.

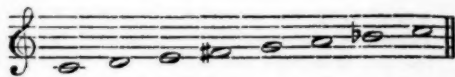
There is in China and India a major scale, arranged in this manner:—



It is manifest that this scale differs from ours in this particular,—that the first semitone, instead of being placed between the third and fourth degree, as it is in ours, occurs between the fourth and fifth, thus creating a total difference

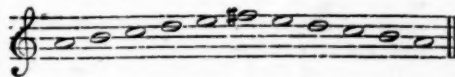
in the order of tones, which is shocking to our ears, while the scale of Europeans seems intolerable to the Chinese.\*

The Scotch and the Irish have a scale somewhat like that of the Chinese, but still more singular, because there is a whole tone, instead of a semitone, between the seventh and eighth sounds. The following is an example of this scale:—



The defects of this scale are still more shocking to the ear of a musician than those of the Chinese, on account of the double false relation which exists between the major and minor fourth of the key and the seventh. Hence it happens that all the Scotch and Irish airs in this scale must be rearranged for publication.

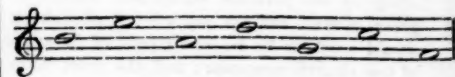
The Irish have also a minor scale, which is very singular; there are only six notes, and the arrangement of it is thus:—



The logical defect of this scale is the same as that of the preceding; for it consists in a false relation between the third and the sixth sound, which has no place in the scale of other European nations.

The scales of which we have just spoken are divided, like that of the French, Italian, or German music, by tones and semitones: they differ from the latter only in the arrangement of these tones and semitones; but there are some Oriental nations, such as the Arabs, the Turks, and the Persians, whose instruments are constructed on a scale of intervals of thirds. Such intervals, and such a division of the scale, can

\* The Abbe Rousset has tried to demonstrate, in his *Memoir on the Music of the Ancients*, and in his *Letters to the Author of the Journal of Fine Arts and Sciences*, etc., that this scale is a natural one, because it is the result of a regular succession of ascending fourths and descending fifths, such as,



This sort of regular movement has something in it pleasing to the imagination, but proves nothing as to the metaphysical connexion of sounds. This scale will always shock the ear of a European musician, because the fourth, first, and eighth, are in a false position relatively to each other.



be appreciated only by organs accustomed by education to their effect; the sensation which they produce on a European ear is that of false sounds and disagreeable successions, while the Arabs find pleasure in them, and are painfully affected by hearing our scale.

Upon considering the effects of such different scales, the question arises:—Is there any scale conforming exactly to principles which are founded in nature? If not, which of them combines the greatest number of desirable conditions? To answer the first of these questions, we must consider it in two ways; that is, we must first enquire if the phenomena of sonorous bodies, and the proportions deduced from them between the different sounds of the scale, result in precise, invariable tones, and if the physical laws of their order are equally certain.

It must be confessed, the science is yet very imperfect in this respect. The phenomena have been ill observed, the experiments negligently made; and, as almost always happens, there has been haste in forming conclusions on uncertain data.

The second consideration is entirely metaphysical. The point is, to ascertain if the relations of the sounds of our scale have a sufficient foundation in their agreement with our sensations, and with the laws of the harmony and melody of which our music consists. Now, whatever may be the view we take of the scale, it cannot be denied that its propriety, in the arrangement of the sounds, is perfect, and that another order could not be substituted for it, without greatly affecting melody as well as harmony, nor, consequently, without changing the nature of our sensations.—*FETIS.*

### Male-voice Choirs.

THE following letter appeared in the *Times* of Sep. 17th:—

SIR,—During the last week you have inserted several very interesting communications and an able article on the competitions of French and Belgian choirs at Brighton. It appears to be acknowledged that at present England has nothing to show corresponding to the societies of *Orphéonistes* in France and the *Männergesangsvereine* of Germany.

I do not remember that any special remark has been made on the fact that the singing societies in France, Belgium, Switzerland, and Germany, among whom such competitions are usual, are choruses of men only. Is it not probable that the adoption by the English of this limitation

to men of the membership of choral societies for purposes of public competition might, of itself, abolish many of the difficulties in the way of our popular musical advance?

The voices of women are of priceless value, doubtless; but the moment you make the presence of ladies a necessity you create difficulties arising from difference of social position, necessity of having places and times of meeting for practice suitable to ladies, and from the unwillingness of many of them to be carried about to other towns with a crowd of persons whom they only know as chorus singers, which difficulties are often insurmountable. Limit your choirs to men, and you may have bodies of singers who can go anywhere, anyhow, and at any time.

Your obedient servant,

TENOR.

The *Musical Standard* of Sep. 24th makes the following comments thereupon:—

In another part of this journal will be found a letter reprinted from the *Times*, and bearing the signature "Tenor," in which the writer, speaking of the foreign musical competition which has recently been held at Brighton, states that England has nothing to show corresponding to the *Orphéonistes* in France, and the *Männergesangsvereine* of Germany. He further expresses the opinion, that if we were to adopt the foreign custom of limiting the membership of choral societies to men only (for the purposes of public competition),—"it might of itself abolish many of the difficulties in the way of our popular musical advance." What may be the exact meaning of this last mystic sentence is not so easy to determine. Musicians are by no means unanimous as to the precise path which should be followed, or as to what constitutes a real advance in the art. It is quite possible that an advance in the direction that some might consider right, would meet with but little recognition from others, or the people at large.

But this side issue is of little moment in considering the gist of "Tenor's" complaint. He is quite wrong in his facts, and exhibits a considerable amount of ignorance of our musical customs and history. There are already in England many choirs consisting of male voices only. In the Metropolis itself are several such associations besides the old established Glee Clubs. In the provinces there is hardly a town of any pretensions without a society of this nature. It is true that, for the most part, these societies number only a few members apiece; but a short time ago a large male-voiced choir was formed in London on the plan indicated by "Tenor." The society—which, by the way, was largely recruited from Germans resident here—was called "The Con-

cordia"; it led but a sickly existence, and expired without particularly distinguishing itself "in the way of our popular musical advance."

It is by no means an uncommon occurrence for our mixed-voice societies to travel about, and take part in choral competitions. Among other instances may be cited: the National Music Meetings held at the Crystal Palace, and the Welsh Eisteddfodau, besides competitions which are occasionally held in Lancashire and Yorkshire. The Triennial Handel Festivals at the Crystal Palace likewise afford an example of singers travelling from distant parts of the kingdom to assist in these grand performances. There are also many Diocesan Choral Festivals; for these useful gatherings the country parish choirs train patiently, and they often travel willingly a long distance to sing at them. But to show the fallacy of "Tenor's" contention, may be recounted the fact, that during the last Paris Exhibition, Leslie's Choir crossed the channel to sustain the fame of English part-singing. Right worthily did the famous choir succeed in the international contest, the Jury placing it *premier* in the *concours*. The writer of this article had the pleasure of hearing the choir sing at the Trocadéro Palace, and will not quickly forget the enthusiasm and astonishment created by their superb performances. Perhaps "Tenor" has not heard of this excursion, or, if so, he may perchance agree with some of the French critics, who asserted that the good looks alone of "the English misses" were sufficient to entitle the Choir to the *Grand Prix*.

The admirable performance of Mendelssohn's noble music to "Antigone" and "Œdipus in Colonus," as well as Henry Gadsby's "Alcestis," at the Crystal Palace, a few years ago, prove that if necessary we can readily furnish an array of male voices for a particular occasion. But in the interest of true musical progress, one must strongly object to the suggestion of "Tenor" as to encouraging the formation of choirs of male voices only. The value and beauty of our old English glees and madrigals are too well known to need expatiating upon, they compare very favourably with the commonplace German students' songs, or the French semi-martial ditties. But while it may be promptly admitted that much admirable music has been written both by native and foreign musicians for male voices exclusively, it must also be remembered that in writing for one set of voices alone, the composer is writing for what is really an instrument limited in the very important matter of compass, or range of obtainable sounds—an imperfect instrument, therefore. To be tied down to this exigency is hardly calculated to advance the art of music either in England or elsewhere.

Practical musicians—and even the public—are too well aware of the great value of that agreeable variety of tone-colour and contrast which the mixed-voice choir affords, to make it at all requisite to dwell upon this view of the matter.

It is unnecessary to comment here on the social side of the question. "Tenor" has ignored this, but it is an aspect of some importance in taking into consideration the difference existing between the habits of various countries. Without asserting that in all respects we are better than our neighbours, it is certainly open to discussion whether it is advisable to copy the scheme of these large foreign male-voice choirs. They may present some good features, but to English ears they certainly exhibit some defects. The exaggerated accents and thin brassy tones of the French choirs are as little to our taste, as is the heavy shouting and want of sympathetic blending that many of the German *Vereine* display. Such defects are probably inseparable from the singing of societies so constituted.

The male-voice choir occupies a well-defined and useful place. It is far better that it should remain in that sphere, than that the natural union of male and female voices, common in our land, should be disturbed in order to please some fantastic or abnormal minds.

The substance of the foregoing remarks has already appeared in the *Times* in the form of a letter by way of answer to "Tenor's" communication: but necessarily that reply was devoid of the amplification and technicalities which are more properly the province of a musical journal.—T. L. SOUTHGATE.

## REVIEWS.

*The Tone Chart, with daily exercises, for vocal or instrumental practice*, by William Blocksidge, price 1s. London: C. Humphries, 114, South St., Blackheath Hill, S.E.

This is a sheet of eight pages, full music size, with Exercises and explanations. The "Tone Chart" consists of a set of tables, showing, 1st, the tonic and dominant of every key in the musical system; 2nd, all key signatures; 3rd, the actual notes composing each key; and 4th, the relation of each note to the pianoforte finger-board. Although valuable to the student of the pianoforte rather than to the sight-singer, these tables have their use for certain pur-

poses, and, if not found too complicated, might prove serviceable to Teachers who cannot or will not draw up their own diagrams.

We regret to observe, however, that the Author advocates the "Fixed Do," and moreover the older and least useful form of it. The principles adopted are stated thus:—

The following work is an attempt to reduce the Elements of Music to a succinct and practicable Method. This is done by taking the Tetrachord in its four common varieties, and the Common Chord in its two universal modes as the bases from which all scales, intervals, and melodic progressions are derived. The Principle of Key-Relationship is left to make itself felt as an effect, the perfect discrimination and appreciation of which, is only possible to the finished Musician.

The Author ventures to differ in one point only from Mr. Hullah's latest development, and that is the manner of inflecting the Sol-fa Syllables. While inflexibly adhering to the "Fixed Do" as the most scientific and simple plan he thinks that the inflection of the vowel-sounds tends from the outset to interfere with the identity of the original seven tone-names, besides from the nature of some of the vowels necessitating more than one plan of inflection. The Tone-chart Exercises give an example of each interval, successively on every one of the twelve mean, tones which are in use in the Octave.

Reliance is placed on the practice and illustration thus given for the recognition of the "Mental Effect" of the different succession of notes; and not on the supposititious descriptive-nature of the Sol-fa. Names in Key Relationship.

We have here a very fair specimen of the older style of Fixed-Do teaching, a style which we fondly hoped had been improved out of existence years ago. That the attention of pupil and teacher should be concentrated upon the one task of learning to name the lines and spaces of the stave, that this process (for which an hour or two's honest work ought to suffice) should be prolonged to an indefinite period, and that the infinitely more important department of Tonality or Key-relationship should be left to take care of itself,—these *were* the principles of tuition in former times, certainly. But Dr. Hullah's recognition of the vital importance of the study of key-relationship to the sight-singer as certainly led us to anticipate a general reform in this respect; and we regret

to find that his example has not been followed on the part of Fixed Doists generally.

The point at issue between the Author and Dr. Hullah does not concern us to enter into; and probably the adoption or rejection of the inflected syllables does not vitally affect the Fixed Do principle. But one or two assertions of the Author respecting the superiority of the Fixed Do deserve a word of comment, especially that where he styles it "the most scientific and simple plan"; regarding which, a question or two will probably suffice by way of answer. 1st, is the plan of naming the degrees of the staff, "DO, RE, MI," etc., one whit *simpler* than using "C, D, E" for this purpose: and cannot the Movable Doist, by singing the alphabetical names of the notes, secure every advantage which is supposed to accrue from sol-faing by the Fixed Do? 2nd, is not the plan adopted of fixing the sol-fa syllables to the degrees of the stave not only ineffectual for the purpose of inculcating ideas of key-relationship, but actually obstructive to that end: and does not this account for the fact that teachers and pupils proceeding thus very often wholly ignore key-relationship? 3rd, which shows the greater "science," the power to affix a given name to a given line or space of the *staff* (the names always remaining the same), or the ability to say whether a given note represents the 1st, 2nd, or other degree of the *key*: and will not the latter "science" secure a degree of sight-singing power even when the former is wholly absent, while the former is absolutely worthless without the latter? 4th, does not the Movable Do *enforce* attention to this vital principle of key-relationship; does not the Fixed Do neglect it; and does not simplicity of the *latter* kind deserve condemnation?

Regarding the other portions of the Author's work, we would rather not express any opinion. Probably the work is intended for use by the Author's pupils only; moreover, the exercises are so few, and so advanced in their calibre, that we conclude he intends them to be preceded and interwoven with other matter; which padding not being before us, we will not do the Author the injustice of judging what we conceive to be an incomplete "method."



One or two things, however, it may be to the Author's interest to mention. Whether he or the printer is responsible for the punctuation we know not: but the "points" really seem as if they had been shaken from a pepper-caster, and the sense is often obscure in consequence. Take, for example, the portion quoted, and leaving out of view the unnecessary comma after the word "which" in the second last line of first paragraph, we find in the second last line of second paragraph the closely connected words "mean tones" separated by a comma, and in the last line of third paragraph the "sol-fa names" have been irrevocably divorced by the insertion of a period. Another objection is the deficiency of information respecting matters which users really need to have explained, because the information is rendered necessary by the Author's own *modus operandi*: which objection is a further proof that the exercises are intended primarily for the Author's pupils. As to which, at page 5, we find certain exercises headed "T.T.S.," "T.S.T.," and "S.T.T.S.," without a word to explain. But after a due amount of study, discovery is made that these cabalistic symbols indicate the order of "tone and semitone" in each tetrachord of each exercise. The last of them, however, is a poser! "T $\frac{1}{2}$ " must mean a "tone and a half," i.e. a minor third; but the corresponding interval in the exercise is an augmented second. Does the Author intend to teach the embryo sight-singer that a minor third and an augmented second are to be regarded as one and the same interval? If so, no wonder the study of key-relationship is ignored. Which being the case, our advice will not have much weight perhaps: nevertheless let us suggest to the Author that if he will only give the subject of key-relationship (or, as we call it, Tonality) its proper place in his system of tuition, he will to a certainty produce better sight-singers and more intelligent pianists.

*The Moorland Witch*, a dramatic cantata, composed by Robert M'Hardy, the libretto by David Herbert. Price 1s. 6d. Edinburgh: Hamilton & Müller, 116, George Street, and Ernest Köhler & Son, 21, North Bridge.

Since the day when R. A. Smith was Scotland's one composer, the labours of

Mainzer, Hullah, Waite, and Curwen have resulted in a crop of young and aspiring artists, who evidently intend to wipe out the reproach that Scotland has not as yet produced a composer of eminence. The present work is at least a good attempt to attain the front rank; and as regards construction, form, and chordal combination, is a much more ambitious production than the plain, honest strains of the composer so well known and so generally admired north of the Tweed.

The "argument" or "plot" of "The Moorland Witch" is of the kind usually adopted in works of this nature: there is a continuous thread or narrative, with or without a moral, but the incidents are not of so thrilling and absorbing a kind as to counteract the influence of the music. The moorland witch is a harmless old lady, who when younger may have bewitched and spellbound a generation of male admirers, but who is now broken down by bereavement and sorrow, and is bearing her burden silent and alone. During the witch period, whoever lived in seclusion was necessarily a suspect; and if he or she happened to be a little less ignorant than their contemporaries, their cleverness or their learning soon procured for them the reputation of a wizard or a witch. So in the present case; a well-intentioned old lady was in danger of her life, the most diabolical motives being attributed to her commonest actions. The result was inconveniencing all round. Everything is cleared up at the last, however, and all ends merry as a marriage bell—marriage bell in fact, for the scene is laid during the wedding of "Harold" and "Ella."

The cantata opens with a "Wedding Bell Chorus," lively and effective, with a merry tintinnabulary rhythm. Next comes a chorus of disappointed female cap-setters, who very innocently air their grievance in public: surely this must be a disappointed male asperser on the fair sex, or else another example of what the un-fair sex is capable! Fortunately, the music of this number is the least happy of any in the cantata, and "serve 'em right" too. Then, after another chorus, giving the other side of the question, by members of the unfair sex aforesaid, the



business of the wedding commences; the Pastor, Harold, Ella, relatives, friends, and spectators performing their parts with due decorum. The arrival of Elsie (the reputed witch), if it does not forbid the banns, disturbs the harmony of the proceeding; there is here more bustle, the chorus accusing and Elsie excusing alternately, and the scene is dramatic and interesting. Soothing words from the Pastor help to still the storm, explanations follow, by some hocus pocus Elsie turns out to be somebody, the transmutation benefits the happy couple, and wedding and cantata both end with a good Bridal Choral March—"Ella's a lady, and Harold's a lord."

The work of the poet is praiseworthy. Generally the music is effective and well-written. There is occasionally a tendency to over-use of the ♯ inversion of the triad, during the progress of the music and also at the termination of a section, period, or movement. Doubtless, in the latter cases, the intention is to avoid a full close, and to suspend the attention of the auditory; but the device is employed too frequently, we think, and almost becomes a mannerism. The Composer wisely avoids overtaking his executants, the music is often "sight-singing easy," and throughout there are no difficulties greater than the average choir is able to carry by storm.

### Teacher's Column.

(Contributions by Teachers and others will oblige.)

**Forcing up the lower register.** To those who assert that in every voice there is only *one* register of tones, meaning by "register" the series of notes produced by the impinging on the vocal cords a *uniform stream of air throughout*, the phrase "forcing up the lower register" of the voice can have little or no meaning. There is a sense, however, in which it may be understood so as to be practically beneficial. Suppose we say that the air-power degrees of any voice are *six*. Two degrees will, then, represent the piano voicing; four, medium voicing; and six, *forte* voicing. Now it is a law of nature that

higher notes may be taken more easily by being produced softly than loudly. Indeed the highest two or three notes in every voice can only be taken softly. For example, let a tenor sing the beautiful barcarole "Young Agnes" in *Fra Diavolo*, on A or B flat, which necessitates his ascending to A or B flat altissimo, four times in each verse. He can only do so sweetly and brilliantly by singing softly—by singing, as some physiologists and laryngoscopists would say, in his "thin register." It will follow, therefore, that while one may use all his breath-force on lower notes, he may not do so on higher notes. If he do, he will be practically "forcing up his lower register," i.e., applying force to a higher series of notes which should only be applied to a lower. Some voices, doubtless, can and do bear the strain, others cannot, as the loss of purity and brilliancy of tone instantly testifies. The principles of Voice Gauging and Artistic Reserve can never be too well studied and practised by vocalists. It is not, however, always easy to keep them in mind and to practically apply them. An indifferent mood, relaxation in the vibrative apparatus, and above all, *nervousness*, are sure to prompt an undue forcing by the air-apparatus, which but too often temporarily destroy the desired vocal effect.

As prevention is always better than cure, the vocalist's watchword here is undoubtedly "Caution," combined with the "Self Assurance" that he can perform the vocal feat he attempts.—J.W.

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## THE LETTER-NOTE METHOD.



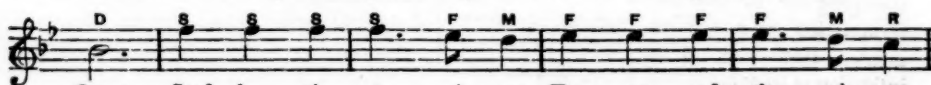
**LETTER-NOTE** appends to the ordinary staff notation the sol-fa initials, on a principle identical with that adopted in former years by Waite's figure method, and at the present time by the Tonic Sol-fa and Chev  methods. Experience has shown that as sight-singing pupils have to undergo two distinct processes—1st, that of cultivating the faculty of tune, and training the ear to recognise the tonality of the sounds; and 2nd, of acquiring a practical acquaintance with the symbols and characters used in musical notation—it is expedient to give the learner some educational aid in acquiring the former while the latter is being studied. Accordingly most of the methods in use at the present time either discard the staff altogether, or else add thereto during the earlier stages certain contrivances for the help of the pupil; the latter is the plan adopted and advocated by Letter-note.

The advantages claimed for Letter-note are, that the power of reading music thus printed is acquired by young pupils quite as easily as either of the new notations; and, once this degree of proficiency is attained, a very slight effort is needed in order to dispense with the aid of the sol-fa initials—so slight, in fact, that young persons often accomplish it of their own accord, without help from their teacher. Further, the notation learned first is that which is likely to remain most familiar and easy, simply because it is learned first; and Letter-note secures the advantage that the student uses the staff-notation from the very commencement of his reading lessons.

The following specimens will show the nature of Letter-note:—



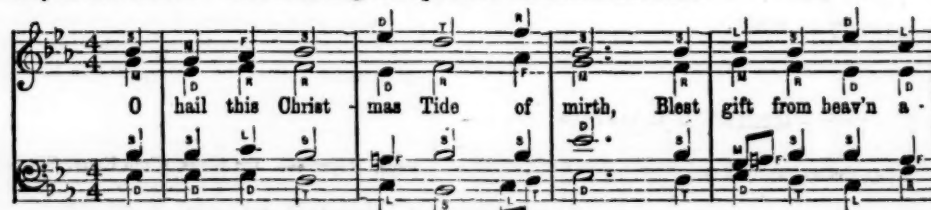
God save our gra-cious Queen, Long live our no-ble Queen, God save the



Queen. Send her vic-to-ri-ous, Hap-py and glo-ri-ous,

The above are the modes of printing adopted at the commencement, at which stage the pupil needs bold and legible symbols and initial letters.

After progress has been made, when the reader is able to depend more upon the notes and uses the letter only when he is in doubt, it is found possible to reduce the size of type, and also to print the music in condensed score, without inconvenience through the multiplicity of signs—an arrangement which renders Letter-note music "as cheap as the cheapest, and as easy as the easiest." The following is a specimen of condensed score:—



These advantages, together with a very careful graduation of the lessons, will, it is hoped, render the elementary text-books useful to all engaged in the work of music-teaching. At present these training-books are well and favourably known in many of the better class seminaries of the Metropolis; the method is also extensively used in evening classes at Birmingham and other large towns.

For the guidance of teachers in making their selections, it is expedient to explain that Letter-note works adopt two distinct methods of teaching, and may be classified thus:—

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| The Letter-note Singing Method and Choral Guide             | } In these works every note throughout carries its sol-fa initial, and they can be used by the very youngest pupil.             |
| The Junior Course   |   |
| The Choral Primer   |   |
| The Penny Educators   |   |
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| The Elementary Singing Master and Elementary Singing School |   |

London: F. Pitman, 20, Paternoster Row. Edinburgh: Johnstone, Hunter & Co.

I believe was one of the very first teachers to take up the Letter-note method in the country, and certainly can claim to be the first to teach the system in the Midlands; and now, after 20 years' experience, am able to say I am more than ever convinced that it is by far the best method of teaching to sing at sight. It embodies all the best points of the Sol-fa method, and from the earliest stages pupils are accustomed to sing from the universal notation.

*Erdington, Birmingham, May 21st, 1880.*

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*The Park, Tottenham, London, Nov. 2nd, 1880.*

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*London, Nov. 6th, 1880.*

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*London, Nov. 17th, 1880.*

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*Visiting Examiner, Trinity College, London.*

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*Dollar, Dec. 15th, 1880.*

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*Birmingham, Dec. 16th, 1880.*

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*Professor of Harmony and Singing at the Midland Institute.*

Your system, I feel quite sure, is an admirable one.

*Birmingham, January 3rd, 1881.*

C. SWINNERTON HEAP, *Mus. Doc. Cantab.,*

*Conductor of the Birmingham, Stoke-on-Trent,  
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